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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004245

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [PKK](#)

SUBJECT: EUR/SE DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S VISIT TO ADANA: KURDISH ISSUES

Classified By: (U) Classified by Polcounselor John Kunstadter; reasons:
E.O. 12958 1.4 (b,d).

(U) This is a Consulate Adana cable.

11. (C) Summary: Incoming EUR/SE Dep. Director Baxter Hunt visited Adana on July 19, meeting with local AK Party officials, attorneys and human rights advocates, and 39th Wing officials. AK party officials expressed confidence about the continuing appeal of the party and cited the lack of U.S. action in Iraq against the PKK as the chief problem in U.S.-Turkey bilateral relations, which they otherwise considered to be on a sound basis. An AK party mayor expressed concern about "Southern Kurdistan Republic Government" stamps he claimed were placed in Turkish drivers' passports at the Turkish-Iraqi border. Lawyers and human rights advocates criticized what they saw as shallow GoT democratization efforts and poor implementation of newly-passed laws and judicial procedures. Several contacts described strong Kurdish desires for more cultural rights and Alevi desires to eradicate or reform the State Religious Affairs Department. Hunt visited the 39th Wing at Incirlik Air Base, receiving briefings on ongoing cargo hub and tanker support missions. End Summary.

12. (C) Incoming EUR/SE Dep. Director Baxter Hunt visited Adana on July 19, meeting with local AK Party officials, including party provincial chief Abdullah Dogru and Seyhan mayor) Dr. Azim Ozturk. Both expressed confidence that AK Party is doing well in local constituents' eyes because of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's charismatic leadership, the AK party's "clean, honest image in comparison to its predecessors", the party's grassroots strength, its focus on raising living standards (citing fuel subsidies to regional farmers as an example) and its delivery of public services, especially infrastructure. Both predicted long-term AK party political success. Dogru and Ozturk claimed that AK also faces almost no effective domestic opposition and neither foresaw issues which would decrease significantly AK's internal party cohesion. In a later meeting, a human rights advocate and attorney, with self-described center-left political views, took issue with the latter internal AK assessment, saying that corruption allegations linked to the Albayrak group could weigh AK down and observed that "many people see the AK party's commitment to real reform as thin and just a game to deflect the military with an EU shield." Both Dogru and Ozturk downplayed the role of religious values in AK party internal deliberations on public policy. Dogru, saying that he himself was half-Kurd and that several AK ministers also were Kurdish, said that AK had done enough on the "Kurdish agenda," and that the Turkish government had higher priorities to address now with its scarce resources. He rejected a link between fighting terrorism and a broader democratization program addressing Kurdish activists' demands. Ozturk, commenting on the GoT's democratization program, said that the GoT did not believe in democratization for a specific religious or ethnic group, but believed it should focus on initiative which benefited all Turks, citing efforts to improve housing, roads and living standards.

13. (C) Both Dogru and Ozturk cited the lack of U.S. action in Iraq against the PKK as the chief problem in U.S.-Turkey relations, which they otherwise considered to be on a sound basis. Ozturk drew attention to PM Erdogan's public comments about a possible unilateral incursion into Iraq to attack the PKK and said that such a step was avoidable if the U.S. would not move against the PKK there. Hunt and AMCON ADANA PO repeated remarks by CJCS Myers about a possible Turkish incursion into northern Iraq. Ozturk stated that it is particularly worrisome to the GoT and AK Party to see "Southern Kurdistan Republic Government" stamps placed in Turkish drivers' passports by Kurdish officials at the Ibrahim Khalil gate opposite Habur gate on the Turkish-Iraqi border. In a meeting with a U.S. military official who manages the ground line of communication into Iraq through the Habur Gate, Hunt also heard a report of Kurdish troops (probably peshmerga or peshmerga-associated) at the Ibrahim Khalil gate starting to wear a new shoulder patch symbolizing the Kurdish Regional Government instead of central Iraqi authority symbols.

14. (C) Lawyers and human rights advocates criticized what they termed as shallow GoT democratization efforts and poor implementation of newly-passed laws and judicial procedures,

saying this was based on both entrenched state elite philosophical resistance to reform and case load constraints.

As an example, several lawyers cited judges' and prosecutors' resistance to allowing cross-examination of witnesses, citing likely prolongation of trials and already excessive case loads. The lawyers declared that the National Police (TNP) is selectively shaping evidence in national security cases to exclude information contrary to State assertions and also suggested that there is inappropriate TNP conduct of operations in the case. They also claimed that, in these national security cases, there is a routine absence of basic physical evidence or analysis thereof. An examination of victims' clothes and medial records could shed light on whether the authorities used torture or the manner in which defendants were killed or injured during TNP operations. Attorneys also said that pre-trial investigation still is conducted by police, not prosecutors. Two attorneys did say that there had been meaningful change in providing for defense attorneys for those arrested, notifying arrestees of their right to an attorney, and authorities, allowing the presence of defense attorneys during questioning.

15. (C) Several contacts described Kurdish desires for greater cultural rights, including Kurdish-language instruction in public schools, Kurdish-language broadcast rights, greater devolution of authority from governors to elected municipal leaders, reduction of the 10 percent electoral threshold, and recognition of a "legitimate group identity for Kurds" within the Turkish republic. When one contact tried to characterize U.S. efforts in Iraq as aimed at allowing a Kurdish state to form, Hunt and AMCON ADANA PO pressed back, pointing out U.S. support for Iraqi territorial integrity and the need for all Iraqi's to support the constitutional-drafting process.

16. (C) Another contact explained Alevi desires, that the Religious Affairs Department either be dissolved or changed to include support for Turkey's Alevis. The Alevi contact said that Turkey's 12 million-member Alevi community (Note: This figure is exaggerated; the real number is closer to 7 million. End Note) will resist what he called the "Sunni" Religious Affairs Department's assimilation policy.

17. C) All the lawyers with whom Hunt met asserted that the Turkish State and Government will not change without sustained pressure for change from outside and pressed for the U.S. to continue to support Turkey's EU accession process. Hunt assured them of continuing U.S. support.

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